

AN INTRODUCTIVE STUDY IN NAHUATL GRAMMAR

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Introduction

Nahuatl-speaking peoples belong to one of the largest living native-language groups in North America. More than one million fluent speakers of various Nahuatl dialects live primarily in central and southern regions of México and parts of *Cuzcatlan* (El Salvador). The Mexican regions with the highest numbers of Nahuatl speakers include the federal entities of *Puebla*, *Veracruz*, *Hildago*, *San Luis Potosí*, *Guerrero*, *México* (state), *El Distrito Federal* (D.F.), *Tlaxcala*, *Morelos*, and *Oaxaca* as shown in Figure 1. Smaller groups of Nahuatl speakers can be found in all 31 states of Mexico (qtd. in Rolstad 7) and in migrating populations across several states of the United States (U.S.).



FIGURE 1. MEXICAN POPULATIONS WITH GREATER THAN 9,000 NAHUATL-SPEAKING PEOPLES IN VARIOUS FEDERAL ENTITIES (qtd. in Rolstad 7). (Image remastering: Citlalin Xochime 2003)

Nahuatl belongs to the Uto-Aztecan family of the greater North American Amerindian category. Geographically, the collective Uto-Aztecan language family encompasses a large swath of terrain from the western U.S. to Mesoamerica. These languages are presently or formerly spoken in the U.S.-Great Basin, in the U.S. Southwest, in Southern California, Oklahoma, and in Mexico and in parts of *Cuzcatlan*. By definition, a language family is linked by "descent or progressive differentiation from a parent speech" (Baugh and Cable 22). Linguistic theory on the Uto-Aztecan languages proposes an original divergence occurring about 5,000 years ago (Mithun 540) resulting in the northern and southern extensions of the progenitor Uto-Aztecan language group.

Nahuatl is an ancient language spoken formerly by the *Mexicah* (Mexican), *Aztecah* (Aztec), *Tlaxcalan*, and *Toltecah* peoples (qtd. in Hill & Hill 1). The Classical Nahuatl dialect was once the language of commerce in Mexico City; yet, since 1833, it has been labeled as an extinct dialect according to the SIL International (previously known as the Summer Institute of Linguistics) (qtd. in Tezozomoc 1997). The classical form of Nahuatl that is taught in academic institutions of today is outdated to varying degrees from modern Nahuatl dialects. Contemporary Nahuatl is a living language with speakers of numerous dialects including Aztec, *Mexicano*, and *Tlahuika* (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 1). Other Nahuatl dialects identified by the SIL International are listed at <http://nahuatl.info/nahuatl.htm>.

Nahuatl Orthography

In the early 16th and 17th centuries, Spanish friars set out to learn Nahuatl discourse using an orthography based on the Roman alphabet and Castilian Spanish writing conventions (Karttunen 1992). Orthography is defined in *Webster's College Dictionary* as "the art of writing words with the proper letters according to accepted usage" or "a method of spelling, as by the use of an alphabet or other writing symbols" (955). At the time of initial European interactions with

Nahuatl-speaking peoples, Spanish orthography lacked systematic practice amongst the Castilian speakers in the New World (Sullivan 9). Consequently, Nahuatl orthography was based on nonstandard Spanish orthography including its historical variations present in the early 16th and 17th century literature of New Spain (Mexico). Nahuatl orthography is comprised of the alphabetic items including the digraphs listed in Table 1 (Sullivan 285).

TABLE 1. NAHUATL ORTHOGRAPHY. The Nahuatl orthography that is based on conventional Spanish orthography is comprised of these alphabetic items which include several digraphs.

<i>a</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>cu</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>hu</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>qu</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>tl</i>	<i>tz</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>
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Nahuatl Morphology

Nahuatl is primarily an agglutinating language; thereby, this language involves combinations of two or more morphemes such as roots, stems, affixes (prefixes and suffixes), and clitics to form a new word. In Nahuatl, one must learn to recognize noun stems in order to construct noun plural (pl.) forms, possessed forms, and noun postpositions. A stem is the "underlying form of a word (a noun or verb) that may consist of a root alone or a root plus a derivational affix, to which inflectional affixes or endings may be added" (*Webster's College Dictionary* 1310). Unlike derivational affixes, inflectional affixes change a stem in such a way that it does not produce a form of the word that warrants an additional lexical entry as a result. Rather inflectional prefixes and suffixes indicate statuses of noun possession, who is the possessor, and instances of plurality. Inflectional prefixes which are applied to verbs may indicate "who did it, when it was done with respect to something else that happened, [and] whether it was done to or for someone else, etc." (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 10).

To contrast inflectional versus derivational affixes in an example thereof, the English word "fellow" is a root word whereby adding the derivational affix "-ship" makes the new word "fellowship." Both "fellow" and "fellowship" are stems that have distinct lexical entries. Yet

when "fellow" or "fellowship" are respectively modified to become "fellows" or "fellowships" by adding the inflectional affix "-s," neither form of "fellows" nor "fellowships" involves the creation of a new word entry in the dictionary (Table 2). Thus while derivational affixes do make new words, inflectional affixes do not create new vocabulary (Mithun 40).

TABLE 2. INFLECTIONAL VERSUS DERIVATIONAL AFFIX EXAMPLE. Derivational affixes create new stem words and thus new vocabulary; inflectional affixes indicate statuses of noun possession, identify the possessor, and show plurality. Inflectional affixes applied to verbs may indicate instances of who or when something happened relative to something else that happened and “whether it was done to or for someone else, etc.” (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 10).

Root Word	Derivational Affix	Stem Word	Inflectional Affix	Distinct Lexical Entry
fellow	-ship	fellow	-s	fellow
		fellowship	-s	fellowship

Besides stems, Nahuatl morphemes include roots, affixes, and clitics. These morphemes are all components of words. In native North American languages, “roots serve as the obligatory foundation of the word and typically carry its main meaning” (Mithun 39). Affixes are “bound inflectional or derivational elements such as prefixes or suffixes that combine with a base or stem to form a novel stem or a word” (*Webster’s College Dictionary* 23). Affixes often support a subordinate context; and they never stand alone as words or expressions and never function as the bases of words. Similar to affixes, clitics never stand alone as words. Yet clitics differ from both affixes and roots in the distinction that clitics attach to a phrase, clause, or sentence (Mithun 39). Collectively, morphemes may take on a variety of different shapes depending on a number of factors, some of which occur in Nahuatl, such as the presence of neighboring sounds, shifts in instances of articulation or manner, and vowel shortening (Mithun 41).

Reduplication of words or syllables, a common operational feature of North American languages (Mithun 42), and the use of redundancy contribute to the literary expression of Nahuatl. The purpose of reduplication is intensification (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 293) in the form of adding emphasis, meter, and mnemonic effects to expressions (Sullivan 2). Nahuatl

prose and poetry is ornate in expression by use of metaphors and synonyms in abundance (Sullivan 1). In Ancient Nahuatl Poems, Daniel G. Brinton writes of the "extreme frequency and richness of metaphor: birds, flowers, precious stones and brilliant objects are constantly introduced in a figurative sense, often to the point of obscuring the meaning of the sentence" (30).

Nahuatl is an accentuated language in which the emphasis occurs on the second to last syllable as denoted by an accent in the "Pronunciation" column of Table 3. The locus of accentuation is retained when a Nahuatl word is agglutinated in form. One exception to the accent-locus rule occurs in the masculine vocative voice in which the suffix *-é* is added to a noun or proper noun: *cihuātlé* 'o woman!' (Sullivan 9).

Nahuatl Vowels

Nahuatl vowels include four short vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and four long vowels, *ā*, *ē*, *ī*, *ō* that are identified with a macron in the lexical entry form (Andrews 4). Long vowels in Nahuatl are pronounced similarly as the short vowels except for a longer duration (Sullivan 5); therefore, long vowels are "prolonged versions of short ones" (Andrews 3). In many cases, there is a breathy resonance following a vowel in Nahuatl words due to the presence of a long vowel as exemplified in Table 3. The occurrences of "*h*" in the word *ehēcámeh* under the Table 3 "Lexical Example" column do not represent the presence of a long vowel in the lexical form. Rather the "*h*" represents a consonant sound known as a glottal stop. This distinctive consonant "*h*" is denoted as an apostrophe (') in the Table 3 pronunciation column and further discussed below.

TABLE 3. LONG VOWELS IN NAHUATL. Long vowels are denoted with a macron (a line above the vowel) in the lexical form. A long vowel indicates a longer duration than that of a short vowel production (Andrews 3).

Long Vowel	Lexical Example	Pronunciation	Definition
<i>ā</i>	<i>ācalli</i>	(ā-kál-lee)	boat
<i>ē</i>	<i>ehēcameh</i>	(e'-ēká -me')	winds
<i>ī</i>	<i>īxtelolohltli</i>	(īsh-te-lo-ló'-tlee)	eye
<i>ō</i>	<i>tōnalli</i>	(tō -nál-lee)	day

Nahuatl Consonants

Nahuatl consonants include stops, affricates, fricatives, nasal consonants, the glottal stop, the lateral, and semivowels. These consonant distinctions are defined below according to *Webster's College Dictionary*.

A stop is a consonant sound made with complete closure at some part of the vocal tract, usually followed by sudden release of the interrupted air (1318).

An affricate is a composite speech sound in which a consonant stop is gradually released with audible friction (24).

A fricative is a consonant sound characterized by audible friction produced by forcing the breath through a constricted or partially obstructed passage in the vocal tract (533).

A nasal consonant sound is produced with the soft palate lowered and the voice issuing entirely through the nose as in the sounds "m," "n," or the "ng" as in "song" (900).

A glottal stop is a plosive consonant whose occlusion and release are accomplished chiefly at the glottis (569).

A lateral consonant sound is articulated so that the breath passes on either or both sides of the tongue (765). A semivowel is a speech sound of vowel quality used as a consonant, as "w" in "wet" and "y" in "yet" (1220).

Nahuatl consonants are orthographically represented as follows: stops correspond to alphabetic items **p**, **t**, **cu**, and the letter **c** (before the vowels "a" and "o," or before another consonant and when it is located at the terminal position of a word). Nahuatl stops **p** and **t** match phonetically with English "p" and "t" as in "pow" and "tow" (Sullivan 6). Word examples that

contain the Nahuatl stop **c** before vowels "**a**" and "**o**" are provided in Table 4. The **cu** corresponds similarly to English "qu" as in "quit." Nahuatl affricates are all voiceless and represented as the digraphic, alphabetic items **tz**, **ch**, and **tl**. Affricates **tz** and **ch** match phonetically with English "ts" and "ch" as in "parts" and "chair." The fricatives **x** and **c** (before "**i**" and "**e**") or **z** (before "**a**" and "**o**") match with English "sh" as in "ship" for fricative **x** and with English "sip" for Nahuatl fricatives **c** and **z** as previously explained before designated vowels. The nasal consonants **m** and **n** match with English "m" and "n" as in "map" and "nap" (Sullivan 7). The lateral consonant **l** matches with English "l" as in "hill," while the semivowels **hu** and **y** match with English "w" and "y" as in "we" and "you" (Sullivan 8).

Consonants with distinction include the lateral affricate **tl** and the *hache saltillo* or glottal stop **h**. Ejectives, such as affricates and glottal stops, are frequently present in North American languages (Mithun 19). To verbally replicate the affricate **tl**, one must release the **tl** sound as a single consonant from the mouth in a voiceless, lateral fashion (Andrews 6). To enunciate the glottal stop **h**, one must close-off the back of the mouth, then "suddenly release the breath banked up behind the vocal cords" (Andrews 5). This enunciation produces a voiceless **h** in the same manner as one does when the "**h**" distinction is made when "uh" (as in 'uh-oh') is expressed. The glottal stop may be "found between vowels, before a consonant, and at the end of a word" (Sullivan 7). Table 4 showcases some distinct consonant sounds expressed in Nahuatl along with examples of consonants with an adjacent vowel and its pronunciation in concordance with conventional castellano Spanish orthography.

TABLE 4. NAHUATL CONSONANT EXAMPLES IN CONCORDANCE WITH SPANISH CONVENTION ORTHOGRAPHY. The *hache saltillo* or glottal stop is a distinctive consonant that is orthographically represented as an *h* in lexical examples and should not to be confused with the breathy resonance of a long vowel. The *hache saltillo* is denoted as an apostrophe (') in the pronunciation examples of Tables 3 and 4.

CONSONANTS	SOUND	LEXICAL ENTRY	PRONUNCIATION	DEFINITION
<i>c</i> (before "a" or "o")	<i>k</i>	<i>calli</i>	(kál-li)	house
<i>c</i> (before "e" or "i")	<i>s</i>	<i>cītlalli</i>	(sī-tlál-li)	star
<i>cu</i> or <i>uc</i>	<i>kw</i>	<i>cuetzpalin</i>	(kwets-pál-in)	lizard
<i>h</i>	'	<i>Mēxihcatl</i>	(mē-shí'-katl)	Mexican
<i>h</i> (with adjacent "u")	<i>w</i>	<i>huītzilīn</i>	(wī-tsíl-in)	hummingbird
<i>l</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>chīlachtli</i>	(chīl-ách-tli)	chili pepper seed
<i>qu</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>quimilli</i>	(ki-míl-li)	bundle of clothes
<i>tl</i>	<i>tl</i>	<i>tlahtōl</i>	(tlá'-tōl)	word, language
<i>tz</i>	<i>ts</i>	<i>centzontli</i>	(sen-tsón-tlee)	four hundred
<i>x</i>	<i>sh</i>	<i>xocotl</i>	(shó-kotl)	fruit, plum
<i>z</i> (before "a" and "o")	<i>s</i>	<i>mazāhuahcān</i>	(má-sā-wá'-kān)	place where one has deer

Nahuatl Nouns

Nahuatl nouns behave like verbs more oftentimes than nouns of the English language. This is due to the inherent capacity for each Nahuatl noun to express its active existence. For example, the lexical entry of most Nahuatl nouns is the third person singular form in the absolutive state (exemplified below), and its literal translation is a declaration of its existence: *calli* 'it is a house.' Thereby, each Nahuatl noun inherently has the characteristic to explicably represent a complete sentence (Lockhart 1). In the first and second persons, nouns take on obligatory prefixes that include the subject prefixes listed in Table 9 (for the customary present tense) and the possessive prefixes listed in Tables 8a and 8b. The use of these obligatory affixes allows a noun to define whether it is in a possessive or absolutive state (explained below). Thus an example from the Florentine Codex, Book 11 provides us with the following: *nacatl in ūlaqual quāuhtli* 'flesh its-food eagle' i.e., 'meat is the food of the eagle' (qtd. in Lockhart 1). Both *nacatl* 'meat' and *quāuhtli* 'eagle' remain in the absolutive state while the noun *ūlaqualli* 'food' forms the possessed

state with the possessive affix *ī-* as follows: *īlaqual* 'its-food.' Forming the possessed state happens when the absolutive state of *īlaqualli* 'food' changes when it loses its absolutive suffix *-li* while taking on the possessive prefix *ī-*. The primarily absolutive state of most Nahuatl nouns is a key feature of the language that will be further explained shortly.

In Nahuatl, as previously mentioned, one must learn to recognize noun stems in order to construct noun plural (pl.) forms, possessed forms, and noun postpositions. The stem portion of a Nahuatl word is the core entity that may be subject to constituent prefix and suffix modification. The stem of a noun is readily identified from its absolutive suffix that entails *-tl*, *-tli*, *-li*, or *-in*. For instance, the stem of *mexīcatl* is *mexīhca* minus absolutive suffix *-tl*. Table 5 lists Nahuatl absolutive suffixes and an application guideline. However keep in mind that some noun stems and multiple types of derived nouns have no absolutive suffix application such as in the example of *chichi* 'dog' (Campbell and Karttunen 2: 33).

TABLE 5. ABSOLUTIVE SUFFIXES -TL, -TLI, -LI, -IN. Apply Absolutive Suffixes to Noun Stems According to the Following Guidelines (Campbell and Karttunen 2: 33).	
ABSOLUTIVE SUFFIX	APPLICATION GUIDELINE
- TL	apply to noun stems ending in a vowel
- TLI	apply to noun stems ending in a consonant, except "L"
- LI	apply to noun stems ending in "L"
- IN	apply to "some stems"

For some Nahuatl stems, a vowel or consonant is often omitted when the stem is inflected, agglutinated, or derived in form. Inflection marks a stem to indicate such things as "person, number, tense, and possession" (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 165). Agglutination, as previously described, is a process that involves combining morphemes; whereas, derivation is a process that "adds something to a stem to change it from one part of speech to another" (Campbell and

Karttunen 1: 165). For instance, the process of deriving a verb from a noun and vice versa is derivation. Derivation may also involve "changing the meaning of a stem without changing the part of speech" (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 165). For example, when the word “happy” changes to “unhappy,” both words continue to function as adjectives in the derivation process.

In some nouns, an "i" or an "a" precedes the absolutive suffix (as noted in underline in Table 6) and as occurs in the Nahuatl words *xōchitl* 'flower' and *nacatl* 'meat, flesh.' For some (but not all) of these nouns taking this shape, when the absolutive suffix is dropped and an inflectional affix is added such as occurs when nouns form the possessed state, the preceding "i" or "a" proximate to the noun's absolutive suffix is also dropped—along with the absolutive suffix—leaving a stem like *xoch* for 'flower' or *noxōch* 'my flower' and *nac* for 'flesh' or *nonac* 'my flesh' (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 15). Table 6 lists examples of Nahuatl noun stems with an attached absolutive suffix.

TABLE 6. NAHUATL NOUN STEMS WITH ABSOLUTIVE SUFFIXES -TL, -TLI, -LI, -IN.
Underlined Vowels are Often Omitted When the Stem is Inflected, Agglutinated, or Derived in Form.

Noun Stems with suffix -TL	Translation
<i>cuīc<u>a</u>-tl</i>	Song
<i>tōcā<u>i</u>-tl</i>	Name
Noun Stems with suffix -TLI	Translation
<i>īxteloloh-tli</i>	Eye
<i>mihtoh-tli</i>	Dance
Noun Stems with suffix -LI	Translation
<i>cihuāp<u>i</u>-li</i>	Lady
<i>tlahmach<u>t</u>l-li</i>	Student, disciple, follower
Noun Stems with suffix -IN	Translation
<i>cuetzpal-in</i>	Lizard, iguana
<i>huīt<u>z</u>il-in</i>	Hummingbird

Noun Plural Forms

Interestingly, a Nahuatl noun pluralizes solely if it is culturally defined by the “Nahua” peoples as an animate entity. Nahua is the prevalent noun in the literature that encompasses all cultural dimensions of the Nahuatl-speaking peoples. Animates are nouns that are designated as “biologically animate beings” (Mithun 98). In Classical Nahuatl, animate nouns have an expressed plural form and this form remains distinct from inanimate nouns which have no plural form. For example, an animate noun such as *cītlalli* 'star' (singular) has the plural form that is *cīciltaltin* 'stars' (plural). Whereas, an inanimate noun in Classical Nahuatl such as *mīlli* is defined as both 'field' and 'fields,' or *xōchitl* is defined as both 'flower' and 'flowers' (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 65). Yet inanimate objects may form the plural when by instrument of metaphor, the inanimate relates to an animate entity (Sullivan 16). Furthermore, as Campbell and Karttunen point out in their Foundation Course in Nahuatl Grammar, "Most speakers of Nahuatl today add the plural suffixes [pluralize] to both animate and inanimate nouns but not with consistency for the inanimate ones" (2: 32).

To form the plural Nahuatl noun, the absolutive suffix is dropped and one of the following suffixes: *-tin*, *-meh*, *-h*, *-queh*, or, *-huān* is added according to the application guideline presented in Table 7. Some noun stems (ending in a vowel) with absolutive suffix *-tl* take on the plural suffix *-h*, in which the initial syllable of the stem is repeated and its foremost duplicative syllable is lengthened by a long vowel: *māmazah* 'deer' (pl.) versus *mazātl* 'deer' singular (sing.) and *cōcone*h 'children' versus *conētl* 'child' (sing.) (Sullivan 17). Also, notice how the long vowel in the singular *mazātl* and *conētl* is then shortened when pluralized with suffix *-h*. Long vowels, which are rarely denoted in the colonial manuscripts, are shortened when preceding a glottal stop (Sullivan 17).

TABLE 7. PLURAL SUFFIXES FOR NOUNS. Apply Plural Suffixes *-tin*, *-meh*, *-h*, *queh*, or *-huān* to Noun Stems According to the Following Guidelines (Campbell and Karttunen 2: 34).

PLURAL SUFFIX	APPLICATION GUIDELINE
- <i>TIN</i>	apply mainly to noun stems ending in a consonant
- <i>MEH</i>	apply mainly to noun stems ending in a vowel
- <i>H</i>	apply to some noun stems ending in a vowel
- <i>QUEH</i>	apply to some derived nouns
- <i>HUĀN</i>	apply to possessed nouns that suffix-interchange with one of the other four plural suffixes in the non-possessive state

In the Nahuatl language, nouns are compounded with other nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives to create a novel configuration of the constituent elements (Sullivan 215). Two or more noun stems are compounded to form a new noun stem in which the initial noun modifies the second and this terminating noun retains its absolutive suffix (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 275). For instance, the stem of *teōtl* 'force' is *teō-* and when *teō-* is combined with *calli* 'house,' the *-li* suffix of *calli* is not modified to form the word *teōcalli*. *Teōcalli* is a new word meaning "it is a house of creative energy" and is better known as a temple that stands adjacent on either side of a *tlamanacalli* 'pyramid.'

Pronominal Prefixes (Noun Possessed Forms)

Four subtypes of pronominal prefixes that are found in Nahuatl are listed here (Sullivan 25):

- (1) possessive prefixes (definite and indefinite)
- (2) subject prefixes
- (3) object prefixes
- (4) reflexive prefixes

Possessive pronominal prefixes are one subtype of pronouns in Nahuatl that attach to a noun stem. When a possessive pronominal prefix is combined with a noun, the noun loses its absolutive suffix (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 17). For example, when the possessive prefix *to-*

'our' is combined with the noun *calli* 'house,' *calli* loses its "-*li*" suffix to create the word *tocal* which means 'our house.' Other examples include *monan* 'your mother' and *itoch* 'its/her/his rabbit.' Table 8a and 8b list the definite and indefinite pronominal possessive prefixes of Nahuatl (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 17).

TABLE 8a. PRONOMINAL POSSESSIVE PREFIXES: Definite Possessive Prefixes of Nouns, Prepositions, and Adverbs.				
	Singular	Translation	Plural	Translation
First Person	<i>no-</i> (* <i>n-</i>)	my	<i>to-</i>	our
Second Person	<i>mo-</i> (* <i>m-</i>)	your	<i>amo-</i>	you all's
Third Person	<i>ī-</i>	its, her, his	<i>īm-</i> (<i>īn-</i>)	their

TABLE 8b. PRONOMINAL POSSESSIVE PREFIXES: Indefinite Possessive Prefixes of Nouns, Prepositions, and Adverbs. "The inanimate indefinite <i>tla-</i> is used only with postpositions" (Sullivan 25).		
Indefinite Possessive Prefixes	Singular & Plural	Translation
indefinite	<i>tē-</i>	one's, someone's, another's (animate)
indefinite (postposition use only)	<i>tla-</i>	something's (inanimate)

In Table 8b, the indefinite possessors *tē-* and *tla-* are used only when the object is not specified by a noun or by an independent pronoun in a sentence (Sullivan 33). Furthermore, a noun that assumes the possessor state (English genitive "of" or "-s") is juxtaposed to its possessed object noun which takes on a third person possessive prefix. This possessed object may precede or follow the possessor as shown in Example 8.0 (Sullivan 29).

EXAMPLE 8.0. GENITIVE PHRASES: Possessor Noun Juxtaposed With Third Person Possessed Noun (Sullivan 28).		
GENITIVE PHRASE	SYNTAX	TRANSLATION
<i>īpetl cihltli</i>	'her-mat grandmother'	'grandmother's mat'
<i>tēuctli īcihuāuh</i>	'lord his-wife'	'the lord's wife'

In Example 8.1, the possessive prefix *īm-* precedes nouns beginning with vowels or with the labials *m*, or *p*; whereas, the use of its alternate form *īn-* precedes nouns beginning with consonants, except for the labials *m* and *p*.

EXAMPLE 8.1. Third Person Plural Prefix Alternate Usages.	
SAMPLE	Translation
<i>īmīmīl</i>	'their field'
<i>īmōcēlō</i>	'their jaguar'
<i>īmpilhuan</i>	'their children'
<i>īncal</i>	'their house'

In referring back to Table 8a, the "o" of the possessive prefixes *no-*, *mo-*, *to-*, or *amo-* is dropped when nouns begin with short or long vowels: "o," "e," or "a." Conversely, for nouns beginning with short "i," the short "i" is dropped, thus retaining the "o" of the possessive prefixes *no-*, *mo-*, *to-*, or *amo-* as follows: *nocnīuh* 'my friend' (Lockhart 2). For nouns beginning with long vowel "ī," the "ī" is treated the same as other long vowels and is retained as long vowels in either a prefix or a stem are highly conserved (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 18), while the short "o" of the possessive prefixes is dropped.

Possessive suffixes include *-uh* and *-hui* in the singular form and *-huān* in the plural form. The plural suffix *-huān* is applied to all nouns stems that have a non-possessive plural form counterpart; those stems typically involve animates. The suffix *-uh* is limited to a low number of noun stems that end in a vowel; while the suffix *-hui* is limited to some nouns stems ending in a consonant (Campbell 2: 33). Furthermore *-hui* may be added or deleted electively as shown in Example 8.2 (Sullivan 26):

EXAMPLE 8.2. POSSESSIVE SUFFIX <i>-hui</i> MAY BE ADDED OR DELETED ELECTIVELY.	
Non-Possessed Noun	Possessed Noun with and without Possessive suffix <i>-hui</i>
<i>īchtli</i> 'maguey fiber'	<i>nīch</i> , <i>nīchhui</i> 'my maguey fiber'
<i>īztli</i> 'obsidian knife'	<i>mītz</i> , <i>mītzhui</i> 'your obsidian knife'
<i>oquichtli</i> 'man'	<i>īoquich</i> , <i>īoquichhui</i> 'her man'

Nahuatl Noun Postpositions

Nahuatl postpositions are often derived from nouns and consequently, "some grammarians prefer to call them *relational nouns*" (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 41). Postpositions are "words, particles, or affixes following the elements they modify or govern" (*Webster's College Dictionary* 1055). Nahuatl postpositions in particular are attached to noun stems as a rule—without the absolutive suffixes: *tl*, *tli*, *-li*, *-in*. According to Thelma D. Sullivan's Compendium of Nahuatl Grammar, Nahuatl postpositions are equivalent in meaning to the English prepositions such as "by," "on," "to," "with," or "since" (109). The only difference is that Nahuatl postpositions are placed after a noun or pronoun and not before as occurs with prepositions that are expressed in English. Sullivan further states that postpositions may be combined with possessive pronominal prefixes as shown in Example 8.3 (107).

EXAMPLE 8.3. ENGLISH PREPOSITION VERSUS NAHUATL POSTPOSITION.

English: by cloud 'by cloud'

Nahuatl: *mex-tli* + *ī-ca* = *mexīca* 'by cloud'

Nahuatl Verbs

In many Nahuatl grammars and dictionaries, the lexical entry of a Nahuatl verb is the third person singular of the present indicative form of the verb. The singular and indicative mood of the verb both lack a suffix, while the third person (present) is represented by an omissive pronominal prefix, thus identifying the lexical entry of a verb as the simplest form of a Nahuatl verb. An important feature to consider while working with Nahuatl verbs is to determine

whether an expressed verb is transitive or intransitive. Both transitive and intransitive verbs take on a subject prefix as specified in Table 9. Yet only transitive verbs include an object prefix as listed in Tables 10a and 10b. The object prefix is positioned between the subject prefix and the verb (Sullivan 32) as follows: *ni-mitz-tlazohitla*, *nimitztlazohitla* 'I love you.' If the direct object is specified as a noun in the sentence, the object prefix remains attached to the verb as such: *ti-c-caqui cuicatl*, *ticcaqui cuicatl* 'you-hear-it song' that is 'you hear the song.'

Table 9. SUBJECT PREFIXES FOR TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE VERBS.				
	Singular	Translation	Plural	Translation
First Person	<i>ni-</i> (* <i>n-</i>)	I	<i>ti-</i> (* <i>t-</i>)	we
Second Person	<i>ti-</i> (* <i>t-</i>)	you	<i>am-</i> (<i>an-</i>)	you (plural)
Third Person	-	it, she, he	-	they

The subject prefixes listed in Table 9 directly precede the intransitive verb: *ni-cochi*, *nicochi* 'I sleep' (Sullivan 31). Since no subject prefixes exist for the third person subject, only the object prefix is added: *nech-notza*, *nechnotza* 'me-he/she/it/calls' that is 'he calls me' (Sullivan 32). The plural subject prefixes in Table 9 are used in tandem with the plural suffix *-h* in the present and past imperfect or with the plural suffix *-queh* in the future and past perfect verb tense (Sullivan 31). The "i" of the subject prefixes *ni-* and *ti-* is a supportive vowel that is dropped when a subject noun or verb begins with a vowel (Andrews 15). As is the case with the third person pl. possessive prefix *īm-*, the third person pl. subject prefix *am-*, and the object prefix *quim-*, these prefixes only precede nouns beginning with vowels or with the labials *m*, or *p*. Otherwise, the alternate prefixes *īn-*, *an-* and *quin-* are used respectively with nouns beginning with consonants except for *m*, or *p* (Sullivan 31).

Table 10a. DIRECT OBJECT PREFIXES FOR TRANSITIVE VERBS : Specific.				
	Singular	Translation	Plural	Translation
First Person	<i>nēch-</i>	me	<i>tēch-</i>	us
Second Person	<i>mitz-</i>	you	<i>amēch-</i>	you (plural)
Third Person	<i>qui-</i> , <i>c-</i>	it, her, him	<i>quīm-</i> (<i>quīn-</i>)	them
Table 10b. DIRECT OBJECT PREFIXES FOR TRANSITIVE VERBS: Nonspecific.				
	Singular & Plural		Translation	
Indefinite (direct or indirect object)	<i>tē-</i>		someone (personal, sing., and pl.)	
indefinite (direct object; postposition use only)	<i>tla-</i>		something (non-personal, sing., and pl.)	

Since Nahuatl animates exclusively form the plural in the Classical form of Nahuatl, it remains that the object prefix for the third person plural transitive verb i.e., *quīm-* or its variant *quīn-* (see Table 10a) are incorporated to represent animate entities. Yet recall that Campbell and Karttunen point out in their Foundation Course in Nahuatl Grammar that "Most speakers of Nahuatl today add the plural suffixes [that is pluralize] to both animate and inanimate nouns but not with consistency for the inanimate ones" (2: 32). So this basically means that the object prefix *quīm-* and its variant *quīn-* may represent animate as well as inanimate, plural direct objects in some modern Nahuatl dialects.

To add elements of direction as well as movement of a verb, Nahuatl uses the directional prefixes *huāl-* and *on-*. The prefix *huāl-* indicates "hither, in this direction," whereas *on-* indicates "thither, away from here" (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 143). Nahuatl verb prefixes for the reflexive are *no-* 'myself' and *to-* 'ourselves' for the first person sing. and pl. For the second and third persons, the reflexive prefixes are as follows: *mo-* 'yourself', *mo-* 'yourselves', *mo-* 'itself, herself, himself', and *mo-* 'themselves' (Sullivan 34). The "reflexive prefix is positioned after the subject prefix," before the indefinite prefixes *tē-* and *tla-* when present, and "when combined with other object prefixes, the reflexive prefix comes after the object prefix" as follows: *ni-mitz-no-tlahtohcatia*, *nimitznotlahtohcatia* 'I-you-myself-regard as ruler' that is 'I

regard you as ruler' (Sullivan 35). The reverential verb prefixes are used to "reflect respect or veneration or affection or pity which one person feels for another" (Sullivan 183). The reverential verb is formed by adding a suffix in conjunction with the appropriate reflexive object prefix as follows in Example 9.0 (Sullivan 184):

EXAMPLE 9.0. REVERENTIAL VERB FORMATION.	
Intransitive Verb	Reverential Form (by adding suffix <i>-tia</i>, <i>-ltia</i>)
nemi 'to live'	<i>mo-nemi-tia</i>
Transitive Verb	Reverential Form (by adding suffixes <i>-lia</i>, <i>-ilia</i>, <i>-lhuia</i>)
<i>te-namiqui</i> , <i>tenamique</i> 'to meet'	<i>mo-tē-namiqui-lia</i> , <i>motēnamiquilia</i>
Reflexive Verb	Reverential Form (by adding suffix <i>-tzinoa</i>, usually to the past perfect form of the verb) (Sullivan 184).
<i>mo-poloa</i> , <i>mopoloa</i> 'to be destroyed'	<i>mo-poloh-tzinoa</i> , <i>mopolohtzinoa</i>

Derivational suffixes are called applicatives which "alter the argument structure of verbs, forming stems that include as part of their meanings the role of a core argument as an instrument, location, etc." (Mithun 245). More simply, the verb stem is converted into a more complex entity by means of an "additional derivational suffix and inflectional affixes for person, tense, and number," all of which are then applied (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 180). As a result, applicatives are word generating agents for building new vocabulary (Mithun 246). The applicative suffix of a verb applies an object to the verb and is most frequently found as a part of the Nahuatl reverential verb (Lockhart 16). For the intransitive verb, the applicative has a single object, and for the transitive verb, two objects. The meaning of the verb does not change when the transitive verb is in the applicative, rather "now the action is carried out in relation to an additional object" (Lockhart 14). Usually, the second object bears a dative or an indirect object, with the meaning of "to" or "for:" *nipixca* 'I harvest', *nicpixonilia* 'I harvest for her/him' or, *niccāhua* 'I leave it', *niccāhuiilia* 'I leave it to her/him' (Lockhart 14).

Similar to the applicative is the causitive suffix in that it adds an object to a verb, but it does not include an indirect object. For intransitive verbs in the causitive, "the new object carries out the action indicated by the original verb," in which the "subject of the causitive verb makes someone or something else do something: *nicchīhua* 'I do it', *nicchīhualtia* 'I make her/him do it, have her/him do it'" (Lockhart 15).

Finally, the position of the indefinite verb prefixes (see Table 8b) *tē-* and *tla-* consistently occurs after all other subject, specific object, nonspecific object, reflexive, and directional prefixes as shown in James Lockhart's Nahuatl as Written and as shown in Example 9.1 (26).

EXAMPLE 9.1. ORDERING OF VERB PREFIXES

noconnotēmaquilia

no-c-on-no-tē-maqui-lia

'I-it-(directional)-I (reverential)-someone-give (reverential)' that is, 'I give it to someone'

The second *no-* and the *-lia* are the reverential. The directional *on-* here is more than anything ornamental; it can be connected with the outward movement of the action of giving and also as providing distance and greater complexity, hence adding to the reverential effect, but it is not likely to be reflected in a translation. In this instance, *-c-* must be the direct object and *tē-* the indirect object. Translation: 'I give it to someone.' (Lockhart 26)

Nahuatl Verb Past Tenses

Two past tenses comprise Nahuatl time, the preterite (simple past) or past perfect tense and the past imperfect tense. The past perfect tense refers to an action that occurred in the past or in the recent past (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 87). The past perfect may also be "used when the perfect tense is called for in English ('to have' plus the past participle): *temicti* 'it has killed them'" (Sullivan 55). Whereas, the past imperfect tense refers to an action that occurred in the past but with no action terminating feature: *ninemiya* 'I was living' (Sullivan 49). The perfect marker *ō-* is a particle or clitic (Sullivan 54) combined with four different ways to form the past

perfect tense of the verb: (1) *cochi* 'it sleeps': *ōnicoch* 'I slept', *ōticochqueh* 'we slept'; (2) *temo* 'it descends': *ōtemoc* 'it descended', *ōtemoqueh* 'they descended'; (3) *piya* 'it keeps': *ōquipix* 'it kept it', *ōquipixqueh* 'they kept it'; (4) *machtīā* 'it teaches': *ōquimachtih* 'she/he taught it', *ōquimachtihqueh* 'they taught it' (Sullivan 53). The suffix *-ya* for the singular and *-yah* for the plural are added to form the past imperfect tense of the verb (Campbell and Karttunen 1:87).

The Pluperfect

The pluperfect tense refers to an action completed in the remote past (Sullivan 56). The pluperfect is formed by use of the preterite stem combined with the suffix *-ca* in the sing. and *-cah* in the pl. as follows: *āltiā* 'to bathe someone', *ōticāltihcah* 'we had bathed her/him/it' (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 90).

The Future Tense

The use of the future tense has a six-fold implementation:

- (1) for absolutive future action: *ca* *ōnchocaz* 'she/he will cry'
- (2) for obligatory future actions (corresponding to English 'to have to,' 'must'): *tinemiz* 'you must live'
- (3) in subordinate clauses for uncertain future action in volition (often corresponds to the English infinitive and subjunctive): *atliz* 'to drink', *quittaz* 'she/he should see'
- (4) in subordinate clauses that correspond to English temporal clauses such as those in 'when': *auh in icuac tihualmocuepaz* 'and when you return'
- (5) in subordinate clauses with the meaning of 'so that,' 'in order to': *calaquiz* 'so that she/he may enter'
- (6) in conditional clauses after *intla* 'if': *intla ticmitiz* 'if you were to drink it' (Sullivan 57-9).

Constructing Nahuatl Sentences

We observed in the examples given by J. Richard Andrews's Introduction to Classical Nahuatl and James Lockhart's Nahuatl as Written that each Nahuatl noun and inflected verb embodies the capacity to fulfill the role of a complete sentence—indiscernible from a sentence composed by English grammar convention. To express grammatical relationships in Nahuatl, the subject and object pronouns combined with applicative or causative suffixes supply the necessary and explicable information required to determine "who does what to whom" (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 305). Yet Nahuatl maintains a touch of ambiguity in its lack of discriminating gender as well as in the case of the "subject and object of a sentence in third person singular or plural" which creates a dichotomous translation: *ōquicuah* 'she/he ate it' or 'it ate her/him' (Campbell and Karttunen 1: 305).

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